



# The GIANT PANDA

*The chance to see the giant panda, China's national symbol and endearing icon of the World Wildlife Fund, remains one of the main motivations for many visits to China. Although exceptionally rare in the wild, there are plenty of excellent opportunities to get up close and personal with one of the world's most distinctive creatures.*

Chengdu, the provincial capital of Sichuan Province in west China, is traditionally the most reliable and easiest place to find the giant panda. A short drive from the city is the Chengdu Giant Panda Research Base - a fantastic place to get close to both giant and diminutive red panda. Visit in the morning during feeding time to see these laid-back creatures at their most active. Further out from Chengdu in the bamboo-clad mountains of western Sichuan is Wolong. Here visitors can pay for the privilege of getting closer to the animals by participating in feeding, cleaning out and helping with the day to day running of the sanctuary. Facilities here are very basic but the arrival this year of the newest addition to Wolong's pandas of a recently born cub is certain to be a hit with visitors.

The more adventurous can drive five or six hours south of the ancient capital of Xian to the Qinling Mountains, where there is a chance, however slight, of catching a glimpse of a panda in its natural habitat. The region, which comes under the general banner of Foping Nature Reserve, consists of a number of areas including Lao Xian Cheng, Zhou Zhi and Foping itself. The Qinling Mountains are also the home of the equally rare golden monkey. Sightings of the endangered and elusive giant panda in the wild remain extremely rare, even in this region, but for those fortunate few it can be one of the finest travel experiences of all.

**Ian Mason**  
China Specialist



Red panda, Chengdu

## FACT FILE

A visit to any of these regions can be incorporated into a classical two week tailor-made itinerary to China, starting from £2,350 per person. For details please contact Ben, Chris, Ian, Steve, Thomas or Laura on 01993 838 220.

